

Curious Puppies and Leather Daddies Need Only Apply

HOWARD SCHATZ'S NEW BOOK OF PHOTOGRAPHY CELEBRATES THE JOYS OF KINK.

Natalie Grace, from Australia.
Photographed September 24, 2006



Bill Townley (left) and Thom Coeffel, from Texas. Photographed September 23, 2012

Phil "Tats"
Payton, from
California.
Photographed
September 30,
2007



WHEN HOWARD SCHATZ sent out digital downloads of *Kink*, his new book of portraits taken at San Francisco's legendary Folsom Street Fair, the reaction from friends was near-unanimous. "All but two wrote back to say how wonderful they found the photos and stories," Schatz recalls. The two odd men out were both physicians. "They said, 'Why would you want to have anything to do with these disgusting, sick people?'" the photographer says. "That's just who they

are—narrow-minded, uninformed, and maybe threatened." There will always be those who cling to prejudice, of course, but the pleasure of a book like *Kink* is how completely it disarms knee-jerk bigotries by approaching its subjects with curiosity and candor. "The Folsom Street Fair has to do with acceptance and being nonjudgmental," says Schatz. "Humanity has so many possibilities." While bondage and sadomasochism can be eye-opening for the uninitiated, or the disinterested,

the sense of joy and playfulness in Schatz's images reduces the space between spectators and performers. The photographer, who has worked for *The New York Times Magazine*, *Vanity Fair*, and *The New Yorker*, stumbled upon the fair in the early 1990s while visiting his photo lab on 8th Street and Folsom Street in San Francisco. "There were probably half a million people, half of whom were gawkers, and half of whom were exhibitionists, and the two groups needed

Trigger (left), Amber Shadown (center), and
Puppy Stryker, from Arizona. Photographed
September 23, 2012





Jose Gonzalez, from Florida. Photographed September 28, 2008



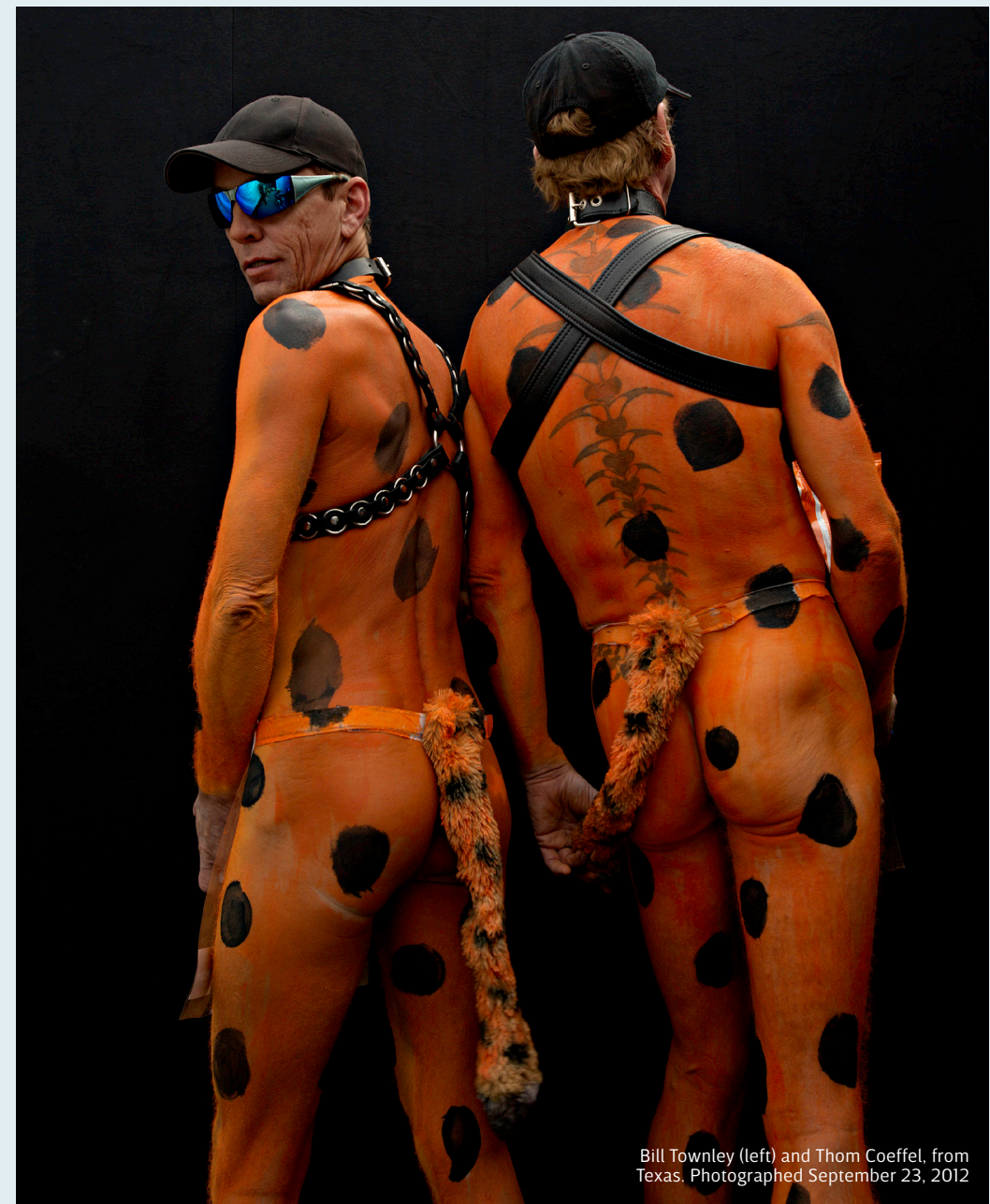
Trip E. Collie (left), Samuel Zetlan (center), and Wild Child. Photographed September 23, 2012.



Douglas Hingst, from California. Photographed September 25, 2011



Tilda Ampersand (left) and Lizzie, from California. Photographed September 27, 2009



Bill Townley (left) and Thom Coeffel, from Texas. Photographed September 23, 2012

each other," he says. "It was a happy, warm, rich, loving experience for everybody there." The following year Schatz returned to the fair with a pop-up studio, hiring students to look for subjects. "Over the course of 25 years I missed only four or five fairs," he says. "I must have photographed 200 to 300 people during the day." Each subject received a free portrait, and another

if they sent back a questionnaire. Many of the responses are peppered throughout the book. A group shot of Amber Shaedow and her "puppies," Puppy Stryker and Trigger, is accompanied by candid insights in which Trigger contrasts his "normal" free time, in which he watches horror movies and goes shooting with his dad, with his "kinky" free time, in which he and Puppy Stryker "play as pups with

rubber squeaky toys, dog collars, dog treats, and belly rubs from our owner Shaedow." For Stryker, who describes himself as pansexual, puppy play has expanded the world. "My puppy side really interconnects with me as a human because there are times when in everyday life a bark escapes my mouth without me even knowing," he writes. "Hell, I even have squeaky toys in my car if I ever get bored." —SAMI PRITCHARD

Kink (Lawrence Richard Publishing) is available in April.

